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BETTER LIVING FROM THE FARM  
A Review of Extension Programs on the Home-Produced Food Supply

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Report Prepared by  
FEDERAL EXTENSION COMMITTEE  
on  
BETTER LIVING FROM THE FARM

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Florence L. Hall, Chairman  
O. S. Fisher  
Miriam Birdseye  
Grace Frysinger  
P. V. Kepner  
Ola P. Malcolm  
C. E. Potter  
Madge Reese  
H. L. Shrader  
K. F. Warner  
W. E. Wintermeyer





## BETTER LIVING FROM THE FARM

### A REVIEW OF EXTENSION PROGRAMS ON THE HOME-PRODUCED FOOD SUPPLY

In a letter to State Extension directors in March 1940, Director M. L. Wilson requested information regarding Extension programs on home production of the family food supply. Replies from 45 States and 2 Territories give evidence that, although an active program for production and preservation of food for home use is a long-established part of Extension teaching throughout the Nation, some States, much more than others, have emphasized these activities in a State-wide way. Various names are given to this program by the States, in addition to Live at Home and Better Living From the Farm. Among these are Feed the Family First, Farm First for Food and Feed, Good Living for Farm Families, and Live at Home and Prosper. Differences in procedures, accomplishments, and problems are reported in these helpful letters from Extension directors; there is apparent agreement, however, on the following objectives for the program on home-produced food:

1. To protect health.
2. To conserve cash for the purchase of essentials that cannot be home produced.
3. To provide a safeguard against uncertainties of income.
4. To help farm families help themselves.

### S U M M A R Y

Many farm families lack an adequate diet.

Incomes are frequently insufficient to supply family needs.

Work on home-produced food being done by Extension agents has increased notably since 1935.

Lower income groups have special need for this work and a number of States have developed procedures to reach them effectively.

Cooperation with other agencies, especially the Farm Security Administration, on "live at home" programs has been noteworthy.

Many special publications, including brief, attractive, non-technical leaflets, are proving helpful.

Several States are conducting State-wide food and feed campaigns.

There is general recognition by Extension staffs that a large obstacle to be overcome is the attitude of some farm families and some Extension workers toward the home-raised food supply. Many States are directing efforts to obtain a wider acceptance of the following facts:



1. Better diets are needed.
2. Home-raised food helps to conserve cash.
3. Home-produced food affords protection where incomes are limited or uncertain.

Almost half of the States have an Extension committee devoting attention, in a State-wide way, to the family food supply. Many of these States find that when this committee includes supervisors of County, home, and club agents, as well as specialists in nutrition, horticulture, livestock, economics, engineering, and related fields, more comprehensive plans are developed and accomplishments are greater than when these staff members work on this program as individuals. These State committees develop plans and procedures for carrying out activities such as the following:

1. Exploring and determining needs and opportunities for home-produced food in counties and communities. Resultant family food needs are budgeted in pounds and number of heads of livestock. These are further reduced to number of acres and amount of seed required.
2. Coordinating Extension activities in family food production with programs of action agencies, such as Farm Security Administration and Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Studying possibilities for correlating food needs and food production with land use planning activities.
3. Utilizing opportunities to promote "live-at-home" programs through cooperation not only with health, welfare, and educational agencies, but also with business and civic groups, commodity associations, and commercial salesmen.
4. Offering definite responsibility regarding the home food supply to 4-H Clubs, home demonstration clubs, and local farm bureaus.
5. Getting State specialists and supervisors to accept responsibility for specific contributions to this program and to include these in their annual plans of work.
6. Arranging for the kind of publications and publicity that will give this program a popular appeal to different levels of income and education.



## BETTER LIVING FROM THE FARM

### A REVIEW OF EXTENSION PROGRAMS ON THE HOME PRODUCED FOOD SUPPLY

In a letter to State Extension directors in March 1940, Director M. L. Wilson requested information regarding Extension programs on home production of the family food supply. Replies from 45 States and 2 Territories give evidence that, while an active program for production and preservation of food for home use is a long established part of Extension teaching throughout the Nation, some States, much more than others, have emphasized these activities in a State-wide way. Various names are given to this program by the States, in addition to Live at Home and Better Living from the Farm. Among these are Feed the Family First, Farm First for Food and Feed, Good Living for Farm Families, and Live at Home and Prosper. Differences in procedures, accomplishments, and problems are reported in these helpful letters from Extension directors; there is apparent agreement, however, on the following objectives for the program on home-produced food:

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2. To conserve cash for the purchase of essentials that cannot be home produced.
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Director Wilson's letter included these questions, replies to which are summarized in this report:

1. To what extent are fresh vegetables, eggs, milk and meat available and used by families on the land?
2. Is there an Extension committee which is giving attention in a State-wide way to the program for home production and preservation of food?
3. How is this work correlated with land use planning, and with the work of agencies such as Farm Security Administration, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Vocational Education, and others?
4. What procedures have been found especially effective in reaching lower-income families with this program?
5. What problems are causing the most difficulty?



1. To what extent are fresh vegetables, eggs, milk, and meat available and used by families on the land?

Although directors quote the Consumer-Purchases Study that a larger percent of farm families have better diets than do families living in the cities, towns, and villages, they are conscious that the same study indicates that 40 percent of the farm families of the United States, approximately 2,500,000, have unsatisfactory diets. The Vermont director says: "Few low-income families have the amount of milk required for good health, or adequate gardens. Many families do not have enough meat because it is too expensive to buy and is not produced at home." The New York Extension director quotes census figures to the effect that 25 percent of the farms in that State did not have gardens and the average value of farm gardens planted was less than \$33. The Georgia Extension director reports that 39 percent of the farms in the State were without a milk cow in 1930, but consistent effort for 10 years by the Extension Service, working with other agencies, has reduced this percentage of cowless farms to approximately 25 percent. The Arkansas director brings out the point that higher income families produce a larger amount of food for home use than low-income families. He quotes a recent study showing that families with incomes under \$250 are producing less than 10 percent of the food they consume. As income increases the percentage of food produced increases. The family with \$1,000 to \$1,500 annual income produces 70 percent of its food supply.

Annual reports show that Extension agents assisted more than 490,000 families during 1939 to reduce expenditures by producing a larger part of their food. This is an increase of approximately 34 percent over the number assisted in this way in 1935.

One striking indication of the need for helping farm families to conserve cash for the purchase of essentials that cannot be home produced is brought out by the recent report of the National Resources Committee that more than a million farm families of the Nation have incomes of less than \$500 a year, including farm-furnished goods.

2. Is there an Extension committee which is giving attention in a State-wide way to the program for home production and preservation of food?

In 20 of the 45 States reporting, there is an Extension committee giving attention in a State-wide way to such programs as Live-at-Home, or Better Living From the Farm. Membership on these



committees usually includes specialists in nutrition, dairying, poultry, horticulture, vegetable gardening, and livestock, and some members of the supervisory staff. In some States, economists, ~~land-~~ use project leaders, farm- and home-management specialists are members, and a few States include the Extension editor. In several States that do not report State committees, there are county and community committees whose chief function is to develop plans for carrying out programs on home-produced food.

3. How is this work correlated with land- use planning, and with the work of agencies such as Farm Security Administration, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Vocational Education, and others?

Farm Security Administration.-- Considerable cooperation with the F. S. A. is described, and this situation is typical of cooperative effort in many States, i. e., Extension specialists conduct training schools for F. S. A. farm and home supervisors and prepare subject-matter leaflets adapted to the needs of their clients; adequate home-production plans have been developed, and assistance has been given in locating needed equipment, seed, and livestock.

Agricultural Adjustment Administration.-- In the Southern States especially, cooperation is reported with the A. A. A. in the Live-at-Home Program. This quotation from the Texas letter is typical of many, "The A. A. A. highlights the feature of its program relating to growing food and feed for home use." Also this one from Arkansas, "The A. A. A. contributes to emphasis on this program and provides tools for carrying it out." From Nevada we quote the following: "Home food production is emphasized as an important element in making possible compliance with crop-adjustment agreements from two standpoints, (1) land taken out of soil-depleting crops can be put into home food production; (2) home food production reduces cash expenditure and therefore makes it possible to decrease land allotted to cash crops that are soil depleting." From another section it is reported that the "A. A. A. has not financially or otherwise encouraged a Live-at-Home Program."

Many instances are listed in the director's letters of fine cooperation with vocational teachers in agriculture and home economics, Work Projects Administration, National Youth Administration, Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, civic and business associations, health, educational, and relief agencies.

Correlation with land use planning.-- These excerpts from a few of the directors' letters are typical of many:



"Land- use planning committees in many counties have indicated that the production of home food supply and its conservation is a vital problem." (Colorado.)

"The Live-at-Home program is definitely correlated with land- use planning in the three counties selected for demonstration counties with the home demonstration agent participating. In all these counties, surveys have been made to determine the present situations in home food production and preservation, and facts are now being presented to local groups for their recommendations." (Kentucky.)

"Home food production is closely correlated with land- use planning where it has been made one of our major sub-divisions of the home and community section of land- use. Definite information regarding the proportion of the rural population producing adequate food supply is being completed, together with a description of limiting factors, such as water supply and climatic conditions." (Nevada.)

"The land- use planning committees are giving the problem of home-produced food very strong consideration in making their recommendations, especially in areas where commercial crop or livestock production has not been very profitable in recent years." (New York.)

"Land- use planning recommendations will undoubtedly affect future plans and programs regarding food and feed production, and the Extension Service will see that the economic and health advantages of home-produced food are brought to the attention of land- use planning groups." (North Dakota.)

Two directors did not agree with the general ideas expressed above. One stated: "Production of food for family use is not our conception of land- use planning." From the other came this pertinent challenge: "The home production of food is usually considered at land- use planning conferences and at the economic conferences held by the Agricultural Extension Service. It is, however, more likely to be a pious proposal by the conferees than an actual practice which they themselves consider a customary farming method."

4. What procedures have been found effective in reaching lower-income families with this program?

In reply to this question many of the director's letters expressed this thought: "Most of our subject matter on home food production is prepared with low-income families in mind because they constitute the majority of our farm families."



Procedures which have proved especially effective with low-income families are illustrated by the following statements from the letters, grouped under seven headings:

Work with individuals:

Reaching low-income families requires more personal service.

Personal visits are especially effective.

Expanding the local-leader program and encouraging leaders to reach low-income families in their own and neighboring community.

Demonstrations:

Establishing result demonstrations among low-income families is the most effective way to reach other low-income families.

Making special effort to reach low-income families through method demonstrations on foods and nutrition.

Tours:

Conducting farm and home tours to visit low-income families that have followed soil conservation practices and have, for home use and to sell, milk, butter, eggs, poultry, and hogs.

Adaptation of subject-matter recommendations:

Suggesting minimum cash outlay for seed for limited number of standard varieties of vegetables to provide a satisfactory diet.

Encouraging maximum use of farm resources, such as manure for fertilizer.

Encouraging low-income families to provide for a small surplus to sell from garden, poultry flock, or dairy.

In holding nutrition meetings with migratory families, method demonstrations generally employed in Extension meetings are found successful. Subject-matter recommendations were adjusted to language at the third-grade level, and mimeographed material seldom exceeded two pages in length.

Collective buying of seeds:

Distribution of "packet gardens" at little cost,  
i. e., collections of seeds adequate for  
simple farm gardens.

Landlord-tenant relations:

The most effective approach has been to get the  
landlord sufficiently interested in the Live-  
at-Home program so that he will aid in supply-  
ing seed and land to the tenant and, in addition,  
insist that the tenant plant seed, cultivate  
and use the garden for his (the tenant's) own use.

Publicity:

Using news stories, radio, circular letters.  
Distributing leaflets through schools.  
Giving recognition and publicity to accom-  
plishments of low-income farm families.

Some procedures which have proved effective with all income  
groups are described below:

Special campaigns are being conducted successfully  
in several States. In Tennessee more than 65,000  
farm families enrolled in 1940 through post-card  
signatures in a campaign which has as its object-  
ive encouraging every farm family to grow at least  
75 percent of the food for the family and feed for  
livestock. This campaign is sponsored by the  
governor and has the cooperation of every agency  
in the State concerned with agriculture. In  
Nebraska the program has been adapted to meet the  
very serious problems caused by continued drought.  
The contribution of each Extension worker to this  
program has been definitely mapped out both as  
to character of work and time of year for each  
activity. Alabama's program, "A demonstration  
garden in each community of the State in 1939,  
is being continued, and more than 50 percent  
of these demonstrators will keep records of  
their gardens in 1940.



In Texas, the State-wide "foods campaign" begun in 1939 was continued in 1940. This is carried on in cooperation with many agencies -- action, relief, education, and private. Through this campaign a nutrition measuring rod, The Texas Food Standard, was presented to the public. Through use of this food standard, an effort is being made to get people to realize that the farm-family food supply is big business, since each adult consumes about a ton of food a year, which roughly speaking is worth \$100. An average family therefore consumes approximately \$500 worth of food each year.

The availability of frozen-food locker plants provides a new incentive for farm families to raise and store their own food. Managers of these locker plants constitute a new and energetic group interested in the production of food by farm families. Patrons and managers of frozen-food lockers in the State of Washington have had an opportunity to discuss mutual problems in meetings arranged jointly by Extension specialists in nutrition and livestock. Production, freezing, and cooking methods all have aroused intense interest in this series, conducted on community, county, and State levels. Similar meetings are reported from Wisconsin, Kansas, Arkansas, and other States.

In West Virginia, the nutrition specialist has developed the "perky and pokey" exhibit, which contrasts the food collars and the dinner tables of the perky and the pokey families. These exhibits have been widely used at State, regional, and county meetings. The legend which catches attention for this display is Are you a Perky or a Pokey?

4-H Club members generally are encouraged to participate in the family food-supply program through projects in gardening, food preservation, dairying, poultry, and meat production. In New Hampshire's program, A Good Living for the Rural Family, the Extension Service encourages family councils on gardening, which include father, mother, and the children. In 1939, 811 4-H Club members produced more than \$15,000 worth of vegetables.

To stimulate interest in the quality of gardens, the 4-H Club program includes a Grade-A Garden Contest under which all gardens are inspected and graded. A special price chart has been prepared so that club members may estimate the value of vegetables produced. Records indicate an average labor income for 4-H Club members of \$15.42. The 4-H pig projects in West Virginia and Georgia include dressing and curing of pork and culminate in county and State ham shows. In several Southern States, the program of each club girl must include a "productive" project - gardens, fruit raising, poultry, or dairying, that contributes to the home food supply.

5. What problems are causing the most difficulty?

Problems in connection with this program are strikingly similar in all regions of the United States. Certain States emphasize climatic conditions such as drought, lack of irrigation, and problems having to do with tenancy, uncertain tenure, and landlord-tenant relations. Obstacles listed frequently are insect pests, poor soil, high cost of seed, lack of pressure cookers, and lack of storage facilities for root vegetables.

Problems mentioned repeatedly which apparently are universal have to do with attitudes, such as -

Difficulty of breaking established food habits to which many farm families are accustomed, i. e., a diet of beans, bread, potatoes, and pork.

Personal likes and dislikes of food.

Lack of interest in home gardens, particularly on the part of farm men, who have grown such traditional cash crops as tobacco.

Families often fail to consider production of the family food supply an important phase of farm management.

A dislike on the part of many farm men of the actual job of gardening.

Failure to do as well as they know how.

From the above statements and from the following, an obvious need is shown for continued education on the economic value of the family food supply and its contribution to the health and well-being of the family.



Many people are still uninformed and indifferent to nutritional needs for health.  
Many families are not conscious of the need or value of producing food for home use.  
There is lack of appreciation of the economic value of home-produced foods.  
The attitude of many people, including some extension men, is that nutrition is not a major problem and that "gardens do not pay".  
Planning ability and ambition are lacking on the part of some groups of people.  
The Extension tradition of presenting subject matter on food production to men only and on nutrition to women only; joint discussion of these matters is needed.

#### PUBLICATIONS

All of the States have publications on the food supply. Among some of the newer leaflets are:

The Home Garden.  
Cream Dairying Suggestions.  
Canning Meat for Home Use. (Alabama.)  
  
Vegetable Varieties for Kansas. (Kansas.)  
  
Chickens Help You Live on the Farm.  
Adequate Low-cost Diets During Drought Conditions. (Kentucky.)  
  
What Do I Eat? (Louisiana.)  
  
The Home Meat Supply. (Michigan.)  
  
Suggested Yearly Plan for Food Supply - Approximate Average for Three Income Levels. (Mississippi.)  
  
1940 Farm and Home Living. (Nebraska.)  
  
Give Eggs a Break.  
Meat From the Pig.  
A Goat as a Source of Milk for the Home. (New Hampshire.)  
  
Food Plan for Farm-Made Living. (New York.)  
  
Facing Farm Facts.  
The Farming Picture for 1940. (North Carolina.)  
  
A Monthly Schedule of Operations in Growing Vegetables for Home Use on the General Farm. (Oregon.)

More Light on Farm Living. (South Carolina.)

Protect Health! Save Money! Use a Planned Family Food  
Supply. (South Dakota.)

Texas Food Standard.

The Home Garden and the 1940 Agricultural Conservation Program.  
Winter Greens. (Texas.)

The Day's Food Supply. (Utah.)

Make the Farm Make the Living. (Virginia.)

Food From the Farm. (Series of six leaflets, Washington.)

Conserve Health and Wealth With Gardens.

Why "Feed the Family First". (West Virginia.)

Twenty-seven of the forty-five States reporting included among their publications a food-production plan for farm families. In these are listed the amounts of various foods needed for a year, based on health requirements; garden and orchard plans; annual budget for canning and storing; number and kinds of meat animals and number of birds in poultry flock needed annually for home use, and suggestions for growing the requisite amounts of feed for such animals.

#### STATES REPORTING STATE COMMITTEES

##### ON FOOD PRODUCTION

(Twenty-one of a total of forty-five)

##### Northeastern States:

Connecticut.  
Massachusetts.  
Maine.  
New Hampshire.  
New York.  
West Virginia.

##### North Central States:

Illinois.  
Kansas.  
Missouri.  
Nebraska.

##### Southern States:

Alabama.  
Arkansas.  
Kentucky.  
Oklahoma.  
South Carolina.  
Tennessee.  
Texas.  
Virginia:

##### Western States:

Colorado.  
New Mexico.  
Washington.



STATES REPORTING PUBLICATIONS  
ON A DEFINITE FOOD-PRODUCTION PLAN  
(Twenty-seven of a total of forty-five)

Northeastern States:

Connecticut.  
Maryland.  
New Hampshire.  
New York.  
West Virginia.

North Central States:

Illinois.  
Indiana.  
Kansas.  
Michigan.  
Nebraska.  
South Dakota.

Western States:

Arizona.  
Colorado.  
Nevada.  
New Mexico.  
Washington.  
Wyoming.

Southern States:

Alabama.  
Arkansas.  
Kentucky.  
Louisiana.  
Mississippi.  
Oklahoma.  
South Carolina.  
Tennessee.  
Texas.  
Virginia.

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